

Report on Study of Uses for Edgecombe Youth Development Center December 1, 2012

Study Uses for Edgecombe Youth Development Center

Section 14.9. The Department of Public Safety, in consultation and cooperation with the Department of Health and Human Services, shall study potential uses for the facilities at Edgecombe Youth Development Center and recommend all possible means of continuing those facilities in productive use after the closure of that Center. The Department shall report its findings and recommendations to the Chairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety and the Chairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services by December 1, 2012.

**North Carolina Department of Public Safety in cooperation with the
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**

Introduction

Edgecombe Youth Development Center closed October 1, 2012. The building has been vacated. Prior to the closure, the Department of Public Safety began communication with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regarding the study of uses for the facility.

Because Edgecombe Youth Development Center was built with funds generated by the sale of bonds, the Department of Public Safety consulted the Office of State Treasurer to determine if there will be legal issues regarding alternative uses for the facility. Lewis Andrews, CPA, Senior Financial Analyst in the State and Local Government Finance Division, suggests that there will be legal issues if the property is sold or leased to a private entity. Any alternative uses by an entity of the State will need to be evaluated individually by bond counsel to insure that the tax-exempt status of the bonds is not endangered.

Department of Public Safety

The Edgecombe facility is one of four newly-built Youth Development Centers housing delinquent juveniles committed to the Division of Juvenile Justice as the most intensive disposition available in juvenile court. Over recent years, admissions to the Youth Development Centers have declined, creating excess capacity in these facilities. The General Assembly included another study in the 2012 budget bill requiring a comprehensive analysis of the population in Youth Development Centers as well as detention facilities in the State. The specific language is incorporated below:

Strategic Plan for Facility Closure, Construction, and Repair

Section 14.8. The Department of Public Safety shall study the population dynamics of detention and secure confinement at the Youth Development Centers operated by the Department and shall submit a strategic plan for facility closure, construction and repair and renovation to the Chairs of the House of Representatives and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Justice and Public Safety by February 1, 2013. The strategic plan required by this section shall include cost estimates for any proposed projects.

The Division of Juvenile Justice is currently engaged in the planning process for this report, examining uses for all the facilities currently in operation, as well as the facilities that have closed in the past two years. The Legislative Research Commission is continuing to study the possibility of a change to juvenile age of jurisdiction. Any changes in the age of jurisdiction could impact the need for beds for youth in commitment status as well as in detention.

Department of Health and Human Services

The Division of Juvenile Justice invited the staff of the Department of Health and Human Services to look at Edgecombe Youth Development Center to see if there were potential uses within their target populations. The following is the report of the Department of Health and Human Services regarding possible uses of the facility:

Pursuant to Session Law 2012-142, Section 14.9, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) studied the potential used for the facilities at the Edgecombe Youth Development Center (Center). DHHS considered the Center as a potential site for a Psychiatric Rehabilitation Treatment Facility (PRTF) to address the needs of youth with significant psychiatric needs as well as co-occurring medical needs. The medical needs of these youth require easy access to

medical facilities and medical personnel. Programming would involve contracting with a service provider to both manage the facility and provide treatment services.

DHHS, Division of Health Service Regulation (DHSR) assessed the facility to determine whether it would meet licensure standards for a PRTF. DHSR staff visited the Chatham County facility in Siler City on July 24, 2012 in lieu of the Edgecombe Facility because it has fewer clients and the same design. After touring the facility and assessing the needs, staff concluded that the facility would not meet licensure standards. It is, primarily, a correctional facility and does not create a therapeutic environment as required. For example, the facility is surrounded by barbed wire fences, has a shower for 8 separated by only a curtain from the common area, and has extremely small cell like rooms that were furnished with a cot and a stainless steel toilet/sink structure. This setting does not seem to be in compliance with Article 3 of the North Carolina General Statute — Client Rights related to the right to privacy, dignity and humane care. Session Law 2012-142 did not allocate funding to renovate the facility to meet licensure standards and needs of the consumer.

The DHHS, Division of State Operated Healthcare Facilities (DSOHF) was asked to assess the facility to determine the possibility of using the Center for expansion of programs and services currently provided by the state operated facilities. Several services were considered including the Behaviorally Advanced Residential Treatment (BART) and Partners in Autism Treatment and Habilitation (PATH) units located at Murdoch Developmental Center. Additionally, consideration was given to programs and services that would augment existing services such as a step-down facility for adults transitioning from inpatient hospitalization to the community. Following evaluation of the physical plant, location and programmatic needs, it was determined that the facility would not be suitable for expansion or development of clinical services. This facility is correctional in nature and would not provide a therapeutic environment without significant renovation. The distance from any of the existing state operated facilities would require that any programming be completely self contained requiring costly additional resources for staffing, medical care, etc.

Because of the correctional nature of the facility, DSOHF also considered using the facility for a forensic services unit. However, due in part to benefit from the co-location of all the forensic units together at Central Regional Hospital, the forensic minimum security unit was recently transferred from Raleigh to Butner. Hospital management has confirmed that the patients on the forensic minimum unit have benefitted from the additional hospital services now available to them. As with the other programs and services considered, forensic patients would also be located a significant distance from existing facilities and would require additional staffing, medical and operational resources to operate effectively. The remote location of the Center limits access to the medical facilities that would be required for various programs and there were concerns that the location would make recruitment of the necessary medical personnel more difficult.

Submitted by Katherine R. Dudley, Deputy Director
Division of Juvenile Justice, Department of Public Safety